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AUTHOR Musgrove, Walter J.; Musgrove, Glenn J.
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ABSTRACT

In order to evaluate the attitudes of the student body of a senior high school toward the school's guidance and counseling services, The Counseling Attitude Scale (CAS), a five-point Likert type instrument developed in 1955 by A. L. Form, was administered to a stratified cluster sample of the school population. The sample size was 320. The responses were analyzed by sex and grade level with a 2 x 3 analysis of variance. An item analysis was also reported for the CAS. The results showed no significant differences in sex, grade level or in interaction of sex by grade level, but the students indicated a positive or favorable overall attitude toward their guidance office. It was inferred that the needs and expectations of the majority of the students were being met by the guidance and counseling services. The authors also demonstrated that the CAS offers a simple and convenient method for assessing an important affective component of the student-guidance office relationship. A copy of Form's Counseling Attitude Scale is included. (Author)

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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD GUIDANCE & COUNSELING SERVICES

by

Walter J. Musgrove

Associate Professor of Educational Psychology

University of South Florida

St. Petersburg, Florida

and

Glenn J. Musgrove

Psychology Student, Eckerd College

St. Petersburg, Florida

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For the past several years there has been a marked increase in interest in the determination of whether an educational course or program is doing what it was designed to do. It may be called accountability, or MBO (Management by Objectives), but whatever it is called, a major element--in addition to the purpose of the course or program--is an evaluation of the goals and expectations of that program.

It is no longer sufficient to offer the students only what the faculty think they should have in the form of prepared packages of educational constructs. There has been a growing incorporation of student needs, either directly or indirectly expressed, which has resulted in an extensive reshaping of modern educational programming. It would appear that the guidance and counseling programs need to be especially aware of the students' reactions to those programs in order to be able to meet the expectations and needs of the student body.

It is generally agreed that the guidance and counseling services are available to all the students at the school, and the individual student has the option either to avail himself of the services of the guidance office or

to reject them. It would seem, then, that if the guidance office projected a favorable image, and if the students possessed a positive attitude toward it, the services of the counseling center would be utilized to a greater degree than if the image and attitude of the students were negative.

The utilization of surveys or questionnaires to determine attitudes toward various facets and functions of the schools is an accepted evaluative and research technique. The literature is replete with reports based upon attitude surveys and many of these are focused upon guidance departments. Most of the latter, however, were designed to investigate specific activities of the counseling services or to examine the attitudes of a specific population. Very few studies have attempted to sample the total population of a school and to evaluate the general attitude held toward the guidance office. One such study was conducted in a Swedish gymnasia by Lindblom and Henrysson (1970). They reported that most of the students were dissatisfied with their present guidance program and felt that it should be reorganized. The authors also reported that most boys, and significantly fewer girls, found conversation with educational and vocational counselors helpful.

Dorothy Tipton (1969) conducted a rather extensive study of students' attitudes and investigated, among other variables, sex differences in attitudes toward counselors. She found that the students generally expressed a favorable attitude toward counseling except in the area of personal counseling where 2/3 of the sample reported they would be opposed or hesitant to seek help from a school counselor. Girls were found to be more uncertain or indecisive than boys toward voluntary personal counseling, but girls expressed a more favorable attitude than boys toward vocational counseling. There was a strongly unfavorable view expressed (by a 3 to 1 ratio) against

non-voluntary counseling.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the attitudes of a secondary school population toward the guidance program in that school. Specifically, the attitude of the various year levels (sophomore, junior, and senior) toward the guidance program was determined. The responses were examined by year level to determine if any sex differences existed, and to see if the attitudes toward the guidance program underwent any systematic change from year to year. It was hypothosized that the attitude reported toward the guidance office would become more favorable as the academic standing (grade level) of the students increased.

The instrument employed for this survey was the Counseling Attitude Scale, a 22-item Likert type scale developed by A. L. Form (1955), with a few words altered to adapt the scale for high school students. Each student was requested to rate each item on a five-point scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral or undecided (?), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The responses were numerically weighted so that the higher numbers corresponded with the more favorable attitudes. A total score was obtained by summing the weighted value for each item so that the higher scores represented the more favorable attitudes.

The author of the instrument reported a reliability coefficient of .94 based upon a sample of 544 college students. No validity data were presented, but a Guttman procedure was employed and a coefficient of reproducibility of .87 was obtained. The investigators in the present study found a reliability coefficient (alpha) of .82 for their sample of 320 high school students. Shaw and Wright (1967, p 519) commented "... it (the Counseling

Attitude Scale) would seem a valuable research instrument." (A copy of the scale can be found as the Appendix.)

The subjects for this survey were obtained by randomly selecting homeroom sections from each of the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in proportion to the number of homerooms in each grade. The high school sampled was located in a city in a mid-central Florida county. The survey instruments were distributed by a counselor to the selected homeroom teachers who administered the survey. They were collected by a counselor. Since the time required to respond to the 22 items does not normally exceed 10 minutes, the administration of the scale was accomplished during a regularly scheduled homeroom period. The questionnaire form of any student who did not respond to every item was withdrawn from the sample (N=18). There were 320 subjects in the total sample, and the sex and grade level distribution can be seen in Table I.

TABLE I

SEX & GRADE LEVEL DISTRIBUTION OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE

	Grade Level			
SEX	10	11	12	TOTAL
M	45	47	21	113
F	102	74	31	207
TOTAL	147	121	52	320

The results of this study revealed that the overall attitude of the students sampled was favorable toward their guidance services. There was a range of scores exhibited from a low of 39 to a high of 91. The mean score of the sample was 77.19 with a standard deviation of 11.38 and a standard error of measurement of 4.85. When the obtained mean score of 77.19 was

compared with the theoretically neutral score of 66.00, it was found that the sample mean was significantly greater ($p < .01$) than the neutral value of 66.00.

When these data were analyzed with the variables of sex and grade level, no differences were found to exist either between the sexes or among the 3 grade levels. There was also no interaction (sex by grade level) discerned. Table II depicts the ANOVA summary data.

TABLE II

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE

	SUM OF SQRS.	DF	MEAN SQR.	F	
Grade Level:	210.617	2	105.318	.809	(NS)
Sex:	8.475	1	8.475	.0651	(NS)
Interaction: (Sex by Grade)	240.844	2	120.422	.926	(NS)
ERROR:	40851.599	314	130.101		

An item analysis was conducted for each of the 22 items of the scale. The top 27% was compared with the bottom 27% of the total sample. A "t" value was calculated for the difference between the means of the top and bottom groups for each item and was interpreted as a rough discrimination indicator. Only one item (#18) failed to discriminate at the .01 level or better, and that item showed $p < .05$.

An adjusted item-total correlation was also computed for each item. This statistic indicated the degree of correlation between each item and the total score with the spurious effect of that item's contribution to the total score removed. This procedure was described by Henrysson (1963).

Table III shows the mean scores and standard deviations of the low and

the high groups, the adjusted item-total correlation value, the "t" value between the two groups and the level of significance of "t" for each item.

TABLE III

ITEM ANALYSIS

ITEM NO.	GROUP	MEAN	S D	ADJUSTED ITEM-TOTAL CORRELATION	"t" VALUE
1	low	3.471	1.088	.225	5.102#
	high	4.183	.722		
2	low	3.038	1.198	.322	5.435#
	high	3.927	.979		
3	low	2.913	1.308	.307	7.519#
	high	4.183	.891		
4	low	2.750	1.180	.559	10.691#
	high	4.317	.683		
5	low	3.173	1.202	.371	7.458#
	high	4.305	.748		
6	low	3.135	1.247	.095	3.021#
	high	3.707	1.329		
7	low	2.837	1.263	.587	11.078#
	high	4.476	.502		
8	low	3.490	1.215	.296	5.571#
	high	4.293	.533		
9	low	3.356	1.269	.331	6.146#
	high	4.305	.661		
10	low	2.913	1.224	.567	9.896#
	high	4.415	.702		
11	low	3.115	1.217	.399	8.725#
	high	4.390	.583		
12	low	2.694	1.253	.542	8.456#
	high	4.037	.909		
13	low	2.788	.952	.263	4.962#
	high	3.476	.919		
14	low	2.375	1.054	.657	12.621#
	high	4.134	.782		

TABLE III

ITEM ANALYSIS

ITEM NO.	GROUP	MEAN	S D	ADJUSTED ITEM-TOTAL CORRELATION	"t" VALUE
15	low	3.000	1.246	.424	7.524#
	high	4.195	.808		
16	low	2.788	1.058	.666	12.142#
	high	4.366	.578		
17	low	3.029	1.234	.379	7.526#
	high	4.232	.851		
18	low	2.875	1.236	.065	2.426**
	high	3.341	1.381		
19	low	2.731	1.201	.649	12.489#
	high	4.549	.612		
20	low	2.827	1.265	.386	7.633#
	high	4.085	.892		
21	low	3.000	1.246	.390	7.931#
	high	4.256	.798		
22	low	1.923	1.012	.603	13.801#
	high	3.890	.903		

# $p < .01$ ** $p < .05$

The hypothesis that the attitudes of the students will become more positive with increasing grade level must, on the basis of this survey, be rejected. The survey instrument was designed to evaluate attitudinal factors, not to differentiate among the specific counseling needs of the students. It may also be that the instrument itself is not sensitive enough to discriminate the differences in attitudes, if indeed differences do exist, among the various grade levels. It can be stated, though, that the results of this study establish that the students attending this particular high school hold positive or favorable attitudes toward the guidance office.

These data may also be interpreted to indicate that the needs and expectations of the majority of the students were being met, since no sex differences were discovered. It could be inferred that if the needs or expectations of any discrete group, either grade level or sex, were not being satisfied, that such a condition would manifest itself in an unfavorable attitude being reported by that particular segment of the sample.

Caution must be employed, however, for these findings must not be generalized to any other population than the one specifically sampled.

This research has also demonstrated that the Counseling Attitudes Scale offers a quick and simple way to evaluate the affective component of the student-guidance office relationship. There is no intention to permit such a process as reported here to supplant such data as the number of individual or group contacts by the counselor and other such "hard" information, but it is abundently clear that such a procedure as shown by this survey presents a viable supplementary technique which can aid in the maintaining of a dynamic counseling service which is sensitive to attitudinal responses of the students.

Walter J. Musgrove

Associate Professor of Educational Psychology

University of South Florida

St. Petersburg, Florida

Glenn J. Musgrove

Psychology Student, Eckerd College

St. Petersburg, Florida

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4) Shaw, M. & Wright, J., Scales for the Measurement of Attitudes, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1967.

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APPENDIX

Please enter the requested information only in the answer sheet by penciling in the appropriate response space for each question.

Do not put your name or other identifying information beyond that asked in the questionnaire: THIS EVALUATION IS TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS.

We are interested in your feelings about the following statements concerning the Guidance Office at High School. Read each statement carefully and decide how you feel about it. PLEASE respond to each item whether or not you have had direct experience with the Guidance Office.

If you strongly agree, mark space 1 on the answer sheet.
If you agree, mark space 2 on the answer sheet.
If you are undecided or uncertain, mark space 3 on the answer sheet.
If you disagree, mark space 4 on the answer sheet.
If you strongly disagree, mark space 5 on the answer sheet.

1. Class Standing.

(1)	(2)	(3)
10th grade	11th grade	12th grade

2. Sex.

(1)	(2)
Male	Female

3. I think the Guidance Office is a great asset to High School.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

4. I feel the Guidance Office is highly inadequate to solve any kind of problem.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

5. Sometimes the reassurance and guidance offered to wavering students by the Guidance Office is helpful in straightening them out.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

6. The Guidance Office's efforts to help students are impractical and inefficient

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

7. I believe the Guidance Office is helpful in assisting students with their problems.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

8. Talks with counselors at the Office are tension releasing if nothing else.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

9. It is a complete waste of time to go to the Guidance Office.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

10. I feel the Guidance Office can be helpful to students needing counseling if they properly use its service.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

11. I regard the Guidance Office a very efficient and necessary part of the High School.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

12. I feel that I can NOT trust anyone at the Guidance Office to help me.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

13. I regard the Guidance Office a purposeful organization that is serving people with problems of adjustment.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

14. The Guidance Office is NOT effective in helping students who are undecided about their future plans.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

15. I believe the Guidance Office does NOT adequately interpret tests results.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

16. The Guidance Office is a poor excuse for a clinic where students may take their problems.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

17. I believe the Guidance Office is a good device for advising students with their problems.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

18. The Guidance Office is of NO direct help to students. One finds nothing he didn't already know by going there.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

19. I think more students should take advantage of the services the Guidance Office offers.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

20. I believe the tests used by the Guidance Office are worthwhile taking.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

21. I believe the Guidance Office is simply NOT interested in students or their problems.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

22. I recommend the services of the Guidance Office to all who need help.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

23. I feel that our Guidance Office does enough good work to warrant its existence

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

24. There is a complete lack of organization at the Guidance Office--one always gets the run around.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
SA	A	?	D	SD

COUNSELING ATTITUDE SCALE

We are interested in your feelings about the following statements concerning the Counseling Center at _____. Read each statement carefully and decide how you feel about it. *PLEASE respond to each item whether or not you have had direct experience with the Counseling Center.*

If you strongly agree, encircle SA.
If you agree, encircle A.
If you are undecided or uncertain, encircle ?.
If you disagree, encircle D.
If you strongly disagree, encircle SD.

/ 1. I think the Counseling Center is a great asset to _____ College.

SA A ? D SD

* 2. I feel the Counseling Center is highly inadequate to solve any kind of problem.

3. Sometimes the reassurance and guidance offered to wavering students by the Counseling Center is helpful in straightening them out.

* 4. The Counseling Center's efforts to help students are impractical and inefficient.

5. I believe the Counseling Center is helpful in assisting students with their problems.

6. Talks with counselors at the Center are tension releasing if nothing else.

* 7. It is a complete waste of time to go to the Counseling Center.

8. I feel the Counseling Center can be helpful to students needing counseling if they properly use its service.

9. I regard the Counseling Center a very efficient and necessary part of the college.

*10. I feel that I can <u>not</u> trust anyone at the Counseling Center to help me.

11. I regard the Counseling Center a purposeful organization that is serving people with problems of adjustment.

*12. The Counseling Center is <u>not</u> effective in helping No-Preference students.

*13. I believe the Counseling Center does <u>not</u> adequately interpret test results.

*14. The Counseling Center is a poor excuse for a clinic where students may take their problems.

15. I believe the Counseling Center is a good device for advising students with their problems.

*16. The Counseling Center is of <u>no</u> direct help to students. One finds nothing he didn't already know by going there.

17. I think more students should take advantage of the services the Counseling Center offers.

/ The same response alternatives are used with all items.
* These items are negative and their weights must be reversed for purposes of scoring.

18. I believe the tests used by the Counseling Center are worthwhile taking.
*19. I believe the Counseling Center is simply not interested in students or their problems.
20. I recommend the services of the Counseling Center to all who need help.
21. I feel that our Counseling Center does enough good work to warrant its existence.
*22. There is a complete lack of organization at the Counseling Center--one always gets the run around.